

group of Members and others back every year.

So when he speaks about peace, he knows from which he speaks. I believe it might be well for this Congress to pause and this Nation to pause for a moment just to think about the issues of nonviolence and whether or not it shames us or diminishes us to find another option to the option now posed of a war against Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, I frankly believe that we have not consented to a war against Iraq; and I believe this Congress has yet to fully debate this question, a simple question of declaring war against Iraq under article I, section 8. I am asking the Speaker to bring this legislation up.

I believe that we have another option, Mr. Speaker; and it does not again diminish our respect and admiration and acknowledgment of the hundreds of thousands of young men and women already deployed, willing to offer their lives so that we might live free. It respects their choices. It also acknowledges the different strains, stresses, and tribulations that these young people are under. The story of two Marines, male and female, parents of a 2-year-old son who have to leave now, one already gone, one about to leave and writing their will to determine where that child might go.

I believe we have another option because we are united around the fact that Saddam Hussein is a bad actor, a bad leader, a horrific and a heinous actor upon people. So I believe we can find a way to win this effort against the acts that he has perpetrated by using international law. We can, through the United Nations Security Council, convene an international war crimes tribunal and indict him so that the credibility of his government and Mr. Saddam Hussein is diminished. We can leave a coalition of 50,000 troops on the border to ensure that the U.N. inspection process goes forward. We can begin humanitarian aid. We can as well regain or rebegin, regain the prominence of fighting the war against terrorism, and we can reignite the Middle East peace process.

Mr. Speaker, there are options other than war. I would ask this Congress to do its job and not be silenced, debate this question; but I ask the President to review the options in light of the courage of our young men and women and the United States military. We salute them; we praise them. That is why we are owed the duty to render the right decision on their behalf and the people of the United States of America. There is another option. I argue for peace over war. Listen to the words of the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. JOHN LEWIS.) He knows from whence he speaks.

HONORING EDDY ARNOLD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mrs.

BLACKBURN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor a true Tennessee legend and a national treasure. Eddy Arnold is the most successful country music singer of the 20th century. His body of work, including 28 number one singles, spent more weeks at the top of the country music charts than any other artist in the field.

This March, the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum in Nashville honored the Ambassador of Country Music for donating his personal effects and memorabilia. This selfless donation constituted the largest collection dedicated to a single individual ever received by the museum. The "Tennessee Plowboy" generously offered more than 2,000 photographs, 5,000 radio recordings, tuxedos, guitars, and his coveted Entertainer of the Year Award from 1967.

In a brilliant career that spans 7 decades as a guitarist, songwriter and singer, Eddy Arnold has made immeasurable contributions to the popularity of country music with such hits as "I Hold You in My Heart" and, my favorite, "Make the World Go Away." Now he has made an immeasurable contribution to the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. For that, Tennesseans and, no doubt, country music fans across the country, are deeply grateful.

Eddy Arnold, a living country music legend and my constituent, has enhanced his genre and the culture of America. I want to thank him for his dedication to the arts and for his invaluable gifts to the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum.

H.R. 1322, A BILL TO PROTECT RETIREE HEALTH BENEFITS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. TIERNEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TIERNEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the face of mounting evidence of a national crisis in retiree health care, and I want to announce the reintroduction yesterday of the Emergency Retiree Health Benefits Protection Act, known as H.R. 1322.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 1322 will stem the tide of post-retirement cutbacks or elimination of health care benefits that have victimized millions of American retirees.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one would think that businesses and business values and basic fairness and, in fact, the law would ensure that retirees could rely on health benefits promised to them by employers. But the case is that increasingly, large profitable employers, even those who enticed employees into early retirement, have now changed and are reneging on their commitment.

These corporate cutbacks in retiree health care have reached intolerable proportions. For too long, working people have been denied health care bene-

fits that were promised upon retirement to the lack of strong laws in this area. The retirees lived up to their end of the bargain, Mr. Speaker, and now the companies must live up to their end.

To renege on these promises jeopardizes the life savings of people who are forced to absorb the precipitous decline in their standard of living and dip into their savings in order to make up for a cut or a cancellation in health benefits. Even worse, retirees with preexisting medical conditions may not be able to obtain or afford any new health coverage at all. As a result, their health declines rapidly and, in some cases, needlessly.

A recent study by the Employment Benefit Research Institute found that a 65-year-old retiree without employment-based insurance may require up to nearly \$1.5 million to fund lifetime medical expenses. That is assuming death at the age of 100 and medical inflation of 14 percent annually.

All of this is happening against a precipitous drop in personal savings. According to the AARP, which published "How Americans Save," the United States savings rate has been steadily declining over the last 25 years. The Economic Policy Institute reports that in September and October of 1998, personal savings rates for Americans consisting of contributions to individual savings accounts, as well as employer and personal contributions to 401(k)s and IRAs and similar pension plans, dipped below zero for the first time since the Great Depression. The United States Department of Commerce reports that at the beginning of the 1990s, households saved on average about 8 percent of their disposable income. By 2001, the proportion of income set aside for savings had fallen below 2 percent.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 1322, the Emergency Retiree Health Benefits Protection Act, would reverse these recent trends and bring common sense and fairness back to retiree health. With certain limited exceptions, the bill would prohibit employers from making post-retirement cancellations or reductions of health benefits that retirees were entitled to when they retired.

In addition, the bill would obligate employers to restore benefits taken away after retirement, unless the employer can demonstrate substantial business hardship if compelled to restore the benefits.

Boosting a profitable bottom line would not qualify as a substantial hardship. While many employers are crying hardship today, Mr. Speaker, the hard truth is that many were aggressively cutting employee benefits in the midst of the economic boom of the 1990s when profits were high.

Basic fairness dictates that we ensure that the promises that have been made to those whose life's efforts have contributed to the great economic prosperity of our Nation are kept. We can ill afford the collapse of private